

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty-Five – Paul’s Defense Before Festus.

ACTS 25:1-13:

In our previous lesson, Paul gave his defense to Felix, the Roman governor. He defended himself against the false claims of the Jews and their hired advocate. Felix would put off pronouncing judgments in Paul’s case, claiming that he would do so when the commander of Jerusalem came.

In the interim, Paul has been given the opportunity to speak with Felix and Drusilla. Paul spoke exactly what Felix needed to hear for salvation from himself, righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. Felix was afraid, but not enough to call upon Paul many more times, in hopes of receiving a bribe. Paul would stay in Caesarea for two years and during that time Felix would be replaced by Festus, a new governor.

In this lesson, we will present his case to the new governor and set in motion things that would begin the process of fulfilling the promise that the Lord made to him in Jerusalem:

Acts 23:11 “*But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”*”

Text #1

Acts 25:1-5 “*Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. ² Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, ³ asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him. ⁴ But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. ⁵ “Therefore,” he said, “let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him.”*”

Festus – *Festus Porcius*, virtually unknown in history until he appears in Judea as governor. He would be governor here until his death (approx. 62 AD) and be succeeded by Albinus. He appears to be a far more efficient administrator and will hear Paul’s case early. He also does not appear to be as self-centered as Felix, in that he will find no fault in Paul.

Remember – in **Chapter 23** there were a band of men (more than forty – **23:12-13, 21**) who had taken an oath to neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. We are over two years later and the Jews still want him dead, and unless these were superhumans, it is safe to say that they probably did not honor their oath.

Text #2

Acts 25:6-9 “*And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. ⁷ When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, ⁸ while he answered*

for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.”

⁹ But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?””

Could Not Prove – We are over two years from the incidents that have sponsored Paul to held in captivity. Apparently, Luke records that there is not any eyewitness testimony proving any accusation against Paul. The only thing that seems to not have waned in the two-year period is their hatred for Paul and the desire to see him dead.

Do the Jews a Favor – Festus would know that he reigns in Judea with Roman authority, it was the Jews that complained enough about Felix that Nero finally removed him. So, attempting to do for them as they desired, yet attempting to protect himself in Roman law, he is going to ask Paul if he would volunteer to go to Jerusalem to be judged in the matters pertaining to Jewish law.

Text #3

Acts 25:10-12 “So, Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. ¹¹ For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”

¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!””

Paul’s Response – Festus was hoping to settle this right here; however, Paul’s response was not what he had hoped. In Roman or Jewish Law, Paul has done nothing worthy of judgment. Paul will actually use Roman law in his favor at this point. Remember, to accomplish the will of the Lord, there is the expectation that we do our part.

I Appeal to Caesar – Paul is obviously aware of his rights as a Roman citizen and will invoke his right to appeal this case to the highest source, Caesar. There is no historic reference to the council mentioned in Vs. 12. It is entirely possible it could be the Jewish council, since they would surely be among the accusers. If so, accepting Paul’s appeal to Caesar would be a limited victory, and would rid him of his area of concern to Rome. This may very well be the reason that the Jews in Roma have absolutely no idea of the chargers against Paul when he finally arrives there, out of sight, out of mind!

Text #4

Acts 25:13 “And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.”

King Agrippa – This is the son of Herod Agrippa I, who killed James the brother of John. He is the nephew of the Herod that killed John the Baptist. He is the grandson of the Herod that tried to kill the infant Jesus. He would be appointed king by Nero after the death of Claudius.

Bernice – An evil woman, this is the oldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, yes, the very sister of this Agrippa II. She was first married to Marcus, and after his death, she was married to her uncle, Herod of Chalcis (*Josephus, Ant. 19:5,1; 20:7,1-3*). After his death, she lived in an incestuous relationship with her brother, as his consort. Later, she would marry king Ptolemy of Sicily, then leave him and return to her brother. Even later, she would become the consort of both Vespasian and Titus, and it would be Titus who would finally cast her aside.